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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the problems and challenges faced by nontraditional magnet schools in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The first magnet schools that opened in 1986 and 1991 were based on the Paideia model proposed by Adler (1982). Due to a high level of parent demand, the school district closed three of the poorest performing schools and reopened them as Paideia schools. To promote integration, three schools (two elementary and one high school), called the Phoenix schools, also featured in a performing-arts program. Paideia education aims to prepare students to earn a living, to assume the duties of citizenship in a democracy, and to learn throughout life. The three magnet schools have experienced positive outcomes in the areas of test scores, school climate, grades, college admissions, attendance, and student behavior. (LMI)

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The Transformation of a Zoned Inner City Public High School From Traditional to Non-Traditional

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Chattanooga high school (Tennessee) is a very old and established school with a proud past. However as times changed so did the school. Instead of a school with high academic standards and expectations the school had regressed to one with low test scores, poor attendance (staff and students), faculty and students requesting transfers, poor parent involvement, and behavior problems. Unfortunately a fairly typical innercity high school. The student population had been 1500 ten years before but by 1992 it was less than 400 students. Serious consideration had been discussed in closing the school. Chattanooga high school had a very traditional format of teaching methods, tracking students, and scheduling.

The magnet Paideia schools that had already been tried and tested have been very successful in Chattanooga. William Raspberry, Anne Wheelock among many have described the transformation of education that had taken place in Chattanooga with the Paideia magnet schools. Through the broad vision of community, education, and business leaders, Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences, opened in September, 1986. In 1991, a K-8 Paideia magnet school, Chattanooga School for the Liberal Arts opened in September, 1992 three zoned Paideia schools opened for elementary, middle, and high school students.

By 1992, the popularity of CSAS and CSLA had become legendary as local newspapers carried photographs of parents camped out in the cold to register their children for the 100 new openings at CSAS and 50 new openings at CSLA. With such enormous parent demand, the district made a dramatic move, closing three of the poorest performing zoned elementary, middle, and high schools in the city and reopening them as Paideia schools. To promote integration, these schools, called the Phoenix schools, also had a performing arts magnet feature.

The Phoenix schools have faced challenges that the pioneer magnet Paideia schools did not. First, although some parental choice exists in relation to the school's performing arts program, most students attend the school by virtue of their residence.

Second, far more of the Phoenix students appear disadvantaged. While only a minority of students at CSAS and CSLA--29% at CSAS and 12% at CSLA, respectively---receive free or reduced-price lunch, 74% receive subsidized school meals at Phoenix Schools. While some 42% of the students at the magnet Paideia schools are African American, approximately three-quarters of Phoenix students are African American. Finally, while student test scores at magnet Paideia schools rank at the top of the district, only a few Phoenix School students have scored in the top three stanines on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program, and these schools includes students whose disabilities require special attention.

From the outset, the district's central office implemented policies calculated to enhance success at the Phoenix schools. First, they announced that, with the transformation of the former schools into the first zoned Paideia schools, teachers would have to apply to remain at the school. Once hired, teachers would then have to attend a paid summer institute to introduce them to Paideia and Socratic questioning techniques. Additionally, true to Paideia's insistence that the principal be an instructional leader and not simply a building administrator.

At these early stages in the school's development, building a sense of community within the school is paramount. Students' school experiences therefore include opportunities to engage in meaningful learning in a variety of "real-world" ways. For example, when the North Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce offered Phoenix Middle School some extra funds, the school's teachers suggested that students prepare proposals detailing how they would use the money.

Nurturing teachers' confidence and sense of ownership for what happens in their classrooms is also an important aspect of the Paideia approach at the Phoenix Schools. Small, voluntary staff development workshops bring teachers together to read and discuss professional articles and books of their choice, and discuss how they might apply particular techniques in their classrooms. To gain hands-on experience in

Paideia's literature-based approach to language arts learning, teachers keep journals of and write responses to their readings, mirroring the writing-response workshops they use with their students. Paideia teachers, advocates, and administrators recognize that executing The Paideia Group's principles in zoned schools represents the boldest attempt to implement the model in Chattanooga.

Contrary to the concerns of many of Adler's critics, learning and teaching in Chattanooga's Paideia classrooms are neither authoritarian nor rigid, nor are students forced to move in lock-step through a largely irrelevant curriculum. True to Adler's vision, a combination of seminars, coaching, and didactic instruction are utilized in the city's Paideia program. However, with each of Chattanooga's Paideia schools at a different stage of implementation, each of the learning columns is being executed to different degrees in different classrooms. Moreover, the use of these strategies has not excluded other approaches that turn classrooms into places where active learning is pursues and valued over passive learning(Wheelock, 1994).

The Phoenix Plan

Chattanooga Phoenix Schools are the culmination of a tradition of successful education at Normal Park Elementary, Chattanooga Elementary, and Chattanooga High schools and their transformation to a comprehensive K-12 system of excellence in academics and the arts. The Phoenix Schools arose, soaring to challenge all students academically, creatively, and artistically.

Chattanooga Phoenix Schools (CPS) do operate as three schools engaged in one common mission. Normal Park Elementary has become CPS 1, which offers students in kindergarten through grade four an enriched academic foundation and fine arts experience. Chattanooga Elementary has become CPS 2, which offers student in grades five through eight a continued high quality academic program as well as a creative and performing arts experience. Chattanooga High School and Chattanooga School for the Performing Arts has become CPS 3, the pinnacle academic and

performing arts experience for students in grades nine through twelve.

These three schools, united as the Chattanooga Phoenix Schools, are characterized by high content academic curriculum, high quality instruction that includes seminars, cooperative learning, and interdisciplinary approach; and high performance in fine, creative, and performing arts. In essence, the Paideia model serves as a basis for curriculum and instruction offering a single track. high quality academic program for all children, and the arts stimulate the creativity and expression of students to go beyond the basics and to reach a broader vision.

Shared decision making among the principal, teachers, and community as related to instruction, school resources, and school culture is utilized in the planning and implementation of the Phoenix Schools. The staff members in the Phoenix Schools demonstrate a shared commitment to the Phoenix vision and student outcomes. A true partnership among the parents, the principal, the faculty, the students, and the community has been developed. The schools' characteristics of quality emphasize achieving of expected student and faculty outcomes. Parents and students are expected to meet required levels and standards of involvement, discipline, academics, and achievement. Outcomes are clearly defined and carefully monitored for success.

The full range of students currently zoned at the three schools have automatically become the students of the Chattanooga Phoenix Schools. The current performing arts program students have also remained. Other non-zoned students are being admitted on a space-available basis.

The one track curriculum that is offered at the high school had not provided problems to the school. Most students when asked about their career goals respond with college. It is felt that this is the best curriculum possible for college admission and completion. All students will be enrolled in a single track curriculum while attending Chattanooga High School for Paideia and Performing Arts Phoenix Three- Language arts, math, foreign language, social studies and science. Students enrolled in the

performing arts program, will take two additional performing arts classes each year and the academic students will have one required elective and a tutorial class. Seminar programs will be once a week for all students. Chattanooga High School does not offer pre-algebra, business, vocational, technical, exploratory or general classes. Students in a resource program will attend resource activities as determined by their teacher and individual education plan.

COURSE OFFERING

Language Arts- English I, II, III, IV

Mathematics- Algebra I, Geometry, Algebra II, Trigonometry, Calculus

Science- Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, Physics

Social Studies- World Geography, World History, U.S. History, Economics/Government

Foreign Language- French or Spanish I, II, III, IV

Required Elective:

9- Physical education

10- Computer/Health

11- Fine Arts

12- Fine Arts

Performing Arts - Varies classes as determined by auditions and teachers

The Phoenix Schools have met with varied success. It is difficult to accurately assess test scores at this date because of the changing populations at each school. For instance, at the high school, Phoenix 3, the senior class graduated before the transformation, a number of students transferred to other schools due to the single track curriculum and on the first day of class in September, there were 190 unexpected students. The test scores were low prior to the transformation with Approximately 33%

of the 9-11 grades scoring in average 1-3 stanines on math, reading, and language in 1991. In 1995, the test data is approximately 30% 1-3 stanines. In 1994 the high school added the Copernican plan to the scheduling. This had also helped with grades, attendance, and behavior. The test scores have not been fully evaluated as of yet. A dropout comparison cannot be successfully used because the dropout age is 18 and the student leaving school before graduating is less than 2%.

Paideia Education

A major component of Paideia is the three columns of Paideia.

* to prepare one to earn a living
* to prepare one for the duties of citizenship in a democracy
* to prepare one for continual learning throughout life (Adler, 1982).

In order to accomplish this three-fold goal, Adler believes that students must:

* acquire a core of general knowledge in the subjects: language, literature, fine arts, mathematics, natural science, history, geography, and social studies
* develop fundamental skills: reading, writing, calculating, speaking, and thinking
* enlarge their understanding of ideas and values (Adler, 1982).

Adler's ideals are expanded upon by Ruth Love, former General Superintendent of Schools, Chicago, who had much to say about the Paideia philosophy and the teaching of students:

* teaching children to think, and to use their minds in all forms of learning, is the pervasive concept
* underscoring the belief that all children are educable; it affirms the right of

all children in a democracy to equal educational opportunity; the opportunity to become educated human beings

* recognizing the importance of the preschool years; it stresses the necessity of early tutelage to provide the nurturing so essential to preparation for formal schooling
* differentiating between the three basic kinds of learning and of instruction; it draws our attention to the need for a clearly defined and carefully structured curriculum
* recognizing the role of the teacher is the key to the entire reform, and an acknowledgement of the necessary development, and continuous education of the teacher reflects the prominence of the teacher in the learning process.

The curriculum of Paideia emphasizes ideas and skills that are developed by seminaring, coaching and didactic teaching. Stressed are seminaring and coaching, with little emphasis on teacher talk and passive learning. Education should and must be active learning for all students.

John Goodlad, in *A Place Called School*, (Goodlad, 1984), documented that about ninety percent of the classrooms are entirely teacher dominated, and that five percent of the instructional time in secondary school is spent on direct questioning or thinking.

An important belief of Paideia is that the teachers act as coaches and learners. Teachers need special instruction in Paideia teaching before they begin in the classroom. Teachers are learners also and need staff inservice, reading, and reflection to have a fundamental enjoyment in learning.

As emphasized in the books on Paideia, teachers must understand their role in the learning process. They misconceive it when they think of themselves as the primary cause of learning on the part of students. They are at best only instrumental causes of learning. The primary cause is always and only the activity of the student's mind.

When that cause is not operative, genuine learning does not take place. When teachers regard themselves as imparting the knowledge they have had in their own minds by somehow pushing or loading it into the minds of students; the result is no the expansion of the mind. This is not to say that rote-learning or memorization should be completely eliminated. It simply acknowledges the limitations of the same (Adler, 1983).

Didactic teaching, no less than coaching and Socratic teaching, only helps or assists in the process of learning, making it easier, less painful, more productive. Improvement of the mind, in all three lines of learning, always results primarily from the activity of the learner's own mind, and only secondarily from the assistance afforded by the teacher in the process (Adler, 1982).

As the Paideia Proposal explains, "That is where teachers come in -as aids in the process of learning by discovery, not as knowers who attempt to put the knowledge they have in their minds into the minds of their pupils"(Adler, 1982).

The framework that is used by Paideia teachers was developed by Mortimer Adler and his associates in the 1930's. The concept and the framework of the three columns of learning have undergone changes over the years. Students are locked into courses throughout their K - 12 schooling. Classes are of the liberal arts nature and are presently in very challenging methods.

In summary, the magnet programs have been viewed as successful due to test scores, school climate, grades, college admissions, attendance, and behavior. It would not be prudent to believe that the zoned schools are as successful. However, the Phoenix schools are acknowledged by the community and educators as being superior to the previous schools. If you believe in the Paideia method of teaching all children, then time will tell and your patience.

WILLIAM RASPBERRY

Bright promise of Paideia

CHATTANOOGA — I need to come back when school is in session, but just being here for the beginning of the summer training institute for teachers is inspiration enough.

The teachers — new or returning staffers at Chattanooga's six "Paideia" schools — are getting an immersion in the Paideia philosophy.

I won't attempt to describe fully the idea behind Paideia (from the Greek word for the upbringing of a child), launched more than a decade ago by Mortimer J. Adler and others. It includes ideas about curriculum, teaching, coaching and classroom organization. But it also includes this fundamental tenet: All children study the same curriculum at the same level and with the same expectations of mastery — no watered-down courses for "slow learners," no "tracking," no electives except for the choice of which foreign language to take.

By all accounts, it works. Parents of rich children and poor, black and white, camp out as long as a week in advance of registration to secure a place in these new schools. The children are expected to achieve honor-student results, and they do. Scores at Chattanooga's oldest Paideia school, started eight years ago, are among the highest in the state — in a district that was once an academic basket case. The college attendance rate approaches 98 percent.

Hearing the teachers describe not just the children's academic progress but also the transformation in the teachers' own beliefs about what their children are capable of learning, I am reminded once again of the power of expectations.

I'm also reminded that expectations can work in both directions. You see, I've just been talking to the father of a freshman-to-be at a Washington-area university. He had gone to an orientation session for freshman honors students — the top 15 percent of the entering class, with SATs of at least 1,250 — and while his daughter was otherwise occupied, he attended a presentation on multicultural education.

"The session was for all minority parents, but most of those in the room were African-American or Asian-American. The presenter made a number of points, including these: Our children should plan to take a light load the first year, 'because we want them to do well, and they won't do well if they take a difficult program.' They must absolutely not take two sciences, because the science courses are hard. And whether or not they think they need it, they should sign up immediately for the special multicultural tutoring program.

"One of the parents thought maybe the speaker didn't know she was talking to the families of honors students, but being reminded that she was, changed nothing. The message was still to the effect that you can't compete with the smart kids so let me show you how little you can do and still get a degree."

This parent is sure — as I am — that this university staffer wanted only to ease the transition to college academics for these bright minority youngsters. But he is also certain that the way she went about it — urging them to shun the hard subjects — was a disservice.

I wrote recently about a Georgia Tech summer "bridge" program for minority engineering students that has started to show truly stunning success — but only after a decade of marginal results. The difference: The program staff finally stopped treating the students as though they expected them to have problems with their course work and started treating them like the bright and capable students they are.

That's what the Paideia schools do, and that's what the father who spoke with me thinks should happen at his daughter's university. He even thinks it is borderline racist to do otherwise.

"Who needs David Duke to suggest that black people are intellectually inferior when we have people like this woman (who, by the way, is black).

"When I went to school we were told: 'The faculty and library resources of this university are unlimited; it's up to you to make the most of them.' Today's young people are being told, in effect: Colored kids can maybe get through if they carefully pick the easiest courses and don't let themselves be seriously challenged."

Both Georgia Tech and Chattanooga's Paideia schools are proving that young people will rise to our higher expectations of them. Why should we doubt that they will sink to our lower ones?

Washington Post Writers Group

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